

Class of Washington Students Climb the Giant Evergreen known as the WASL!

MY Access! Writing Program Propels Class of Failing Students to Success on WASL Writing Exam and One Step Closer to Graduation!

The great state of Washington is known for many things: luscious evergreens, beautiful mountains and lakes, world renowned sea ports, award-winning coffee blends, and of course, the best apples in the world. And in the Bremerton School District, academic excellence is paramount and as high as Seattle's Space Needle.

The district, one of Kitsap County, Washington's best kept secrets, is located across from the Puget Sound and is home to about 5,500 students. The district consists of six elementary schools (grades K-5), one middle school (grades 6-8), one high school (grades 9-12), an alternative school, and Alliance Academy (a K-8 home school partnership program). The district also hosts a 1,300 seat Performing Arts Center and the West Sound Technical Skills Center, a regional cooperative career-technical educational program for high school students.

While Bremerton may be one of the county's best kept secrets, it is no secret to educators here that success on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is critical to students' success in and beyond high school.

One of the major components of the exam is the state writing test, given in grades 4, 7 and 10. Students must pass this portion of the WASL by the time they exit high school, in order to receive their diplomas. "To say that learning how to write is essential would be an understatement," said Judy Macauley, English/ Language Arts Teacher at Bremerton High School.

In 2007, Ms Macauley had a class of 17 students who failed the writing portion of the WASL;

and she knew something had to be done to prepare them for their second chance. Another failure was not an option for these students if they hoped to graduate.

So she went in search of the ideal writing program, in order to build "Evergreen stature" students through the practice of writing, and "grow tall" on the exam. She decided that the



MY Access!® online instructional writing program was the perfect tool for her students.

According to Ms. Macauley, "Preparing for the WASL writing test was definitely the major reason why we piloted MY Access!. But we believe in teaching beyond the test, and that literacy builds lifelong skills. We saw that ideal come to life in MY Access!."

Ms. Macauley used the program with the class of students preparing to retake the writing exam. “We were impressed right away with the instant, but detailed feedback, and the confidence it instilled in the students to keep writing. They kept on writing and they got better. We cannot say enough about the MY Access! program!” she enthuses.

In just four short months, her students submitted more than 70 essays, and according to Macauley, “With the help of MY Access!, I was able to identify the specific errors each student made, and give them individualized lessons to learn how to correct them. Each student “got it” and was thrilled to

finally learn how to write correctly. Their proofreading skills improved enormously as they sought to avoid the blue marks that MY Editor provides.”

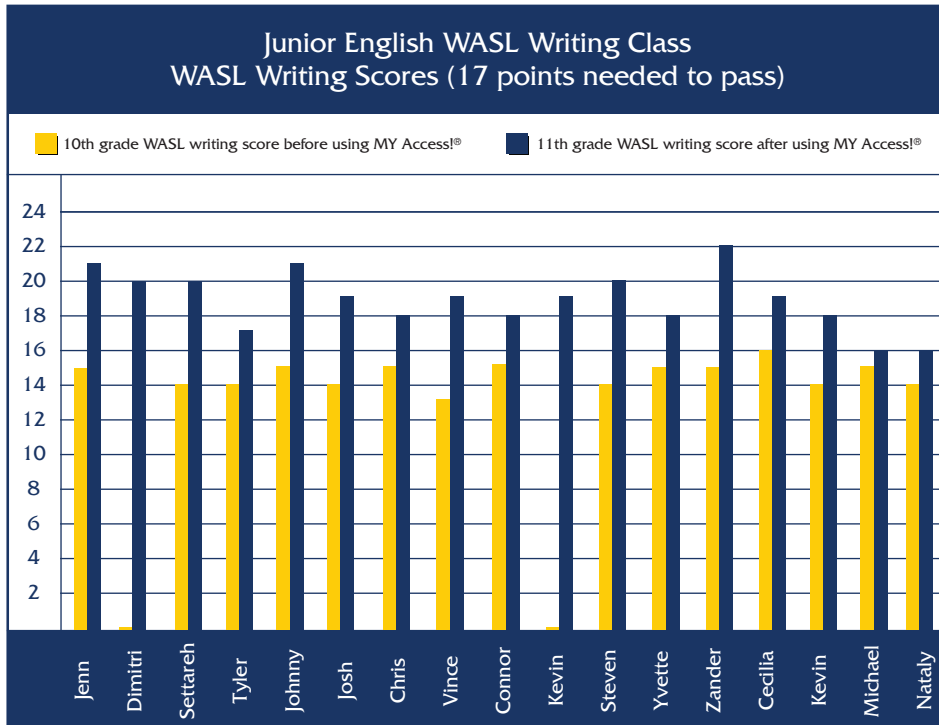
What would Washington say? “I cannot tell a lie?” The numbers don’t lie: Of her 17 students who re-took the WASL writing exam, 15 of them passed, thanks to the help MY Access! provided! That is 15 students who will move one step closer to graduation and who are better writers and thinkers, due to the use of MY Access! combined with Macauley’s outstanding lessons that the program supplemented.

She went on to say that the two students who had yet to pass are well on their way, and continue to improve daily using

the MY Access! program. She said of one of her students, “MY Access! made it do-able for him and easy for me to track his progress and identify his weaknesses.”

Due to the overwhelming success of the use of the MY Access! program, Bremerton High School will be expanding their use of the technology in the school year ahead. “Next year, we will have both the juniors and the seniors who need help writing using MY Access!. Also, the freshmen and sophomores who are in our Reading and Writing Strategies classes will use MY Access!, as well. For my students, most found the WASL “easy,” and didn’t understand why they failed it the first time around,” continued Macauley.

“Sleepless in Seattle” no more, are Judy Macauley and her outstanding students who improved their writing and can rest knowing they climbed the biggest Evergreen of them all, the WASL, and reached the top!



Quick Facts

Who: Bremerton High School

Where: Bremerton, WA

When: MY Access! user since 2007

Why: To build better writers, students and critical thinkers and prepare for WASL